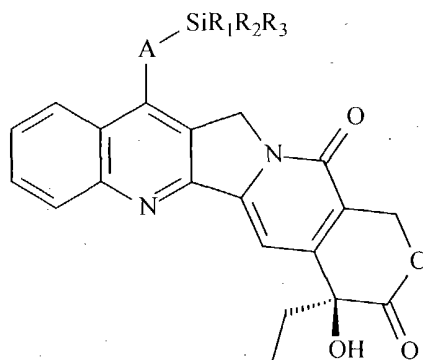


What is Claimed is:

1. A process for synthesizing camptothecin derivatives having the formula:



where A is  $-(CH_2)_n-$  where n is 1 to 6;

and R<sub>1</sub>, R<sub>2</sub>, and R<sub>3</sub> are individually lower alkyl or aryl, the process comprising the steps of:

- a) providing a quantity of substantially pure camptothecin, and dissolving in a strong acid;
- b) adding a strong oxidizing agent to the camptothecin and strong acid solution to form a reaction mixture, then adding the reaction mixture to a vessel containing:
  - i) an aldehyde having the formula  $R_1R_2R_3Si-(CH_2)_nCHO$  in sufficient quantities to react with the reaction mixture;
  - ii) a nonpolar, aprotic solvent; and
  - iii) an iron salt;
- c) agitating the vessel for a predetermined time to produce the formula I compound.

2. The process of Claim 1 wherein the strong acid is sulfuric acid, the strong oxidizing agent is hydrogen peroxide, the iron salt is hydrated iron sulfate and the nonpolar aprotic solvent is a diether.
3. The process of Claim 2 wherein the diether is 1,2-dimethoxyethane.
- 5 4. The process of Claim 1 wherein n is 2 and  $R_1R_2R_3$  are all methyl.
5. The process of Claim 1 wherein n is 2.
6. The process of Claim 1 and a purification step d) of recrystallizing the formula I compound directly from a second nonpolar aprotic solvent.
7. The process of Claim 6 wherein the second nonpolar aprotic solvent is N,N-dimethyl  
10 formamide.
8. The process of Claim 1 wherein additional quantities of strong oxidizing agent are added to the vessel after addition of the reaction mixture.
9. The process of Claim 1 wherein step c) includes agitating the vessel for at least 6 hours.